



## MISS MINERVA and WILLIAM GREEN HILL

By FRANCES BOYD CALHOUN

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### CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

"Ain't she a peach?" asked Jimmy. "She's my sweetheart and she's 'bout the sweetest sweetheart they is."

"She's mine, too," promptly replied Billy, who had fallen in love at first sight. "I's a-goin' to have her fer my sweetheart, too."

"Naw, she ain't yours, neither; she's mine," angrily declared the other little boy, kicking his rival's legs. "You all time talking 'bout you going to have Miss Cecilia for your sweetheart. She's done already promised me."

"I'll tell you what," proposed Billy. "I'mma have her an' you can have Aunt Minerva."

"I wouldn't have Miss Minerva to save your life," replied Jimmy disapprovingly. "her nake ain't no bigger'n that," making a circle of his thumb and forefinger. "Miss Cecilia, Miss Cecilia," he shrieked tantalizingly, "is my sweetheart."

"I betcher I have her fer a sweetheart soon as ever I see her," said Billy.

"What's your name?" asked Jimmy presently.

"Aunt Minerva says it's William Green Hill, but 'tain't, it's jest plain Billy," responded the little boy.

"Ain't God a nice, good old man," remarked Billy, after he had swung in silence for a while, with an evident desire to make talk.

"That he is," replied Jimmy, enthusiastically. "He's 'bout the forgivingest person ever was. I just couldn't get 'long at all 'bout him. It don't make no difference what you do or how many times you run off, all you got to do is just ask God to forgive you and tell him you're sorry and ain't going to do so no more, that night when you say your prayers, and it's all right with God. S'posin' he was one of these wants-his-own-way kind o' mans, he could make hisself the troublesomest person ever was, and little boys couldn't do nothing at all. I sure think a heap of God. He ain't never give me the worst of it yet."

"I wonder what he looks like," mused Billy.

"I s'pec' he just looks like the three-headed giant in 'Jack the Giant Killer,'" explained Jimmy. "cause he's got three heads and one body. His heads are named Papa, Son and Holy Ghost, and his body is just named plain God. Miss Cecilia 'plained it all to me and she's 'bout the speliest 'plainer they is. She's my Sunday school teacher."

"She's goin' to be my Sunday school teacher, too," said Billy, serenely.

"Yours nothing; you all time want my Sunday school teacher."

"Jiminee!" called a voice from the interior of the house in the next yard.

"Somebody's a-callin' you," said Billy.

"That ain't nobody but mamma," explained Jimmy composedly.

"Jiminee!" called the voice.

"Don't make no noise," warned that little boy; "maybe she'll give up t'oreckly."

"You Jiminee!" his mother called again.

Jimmy made no move to leave the swing.

"I don't never have to go 'less she says 'James Lafayette Garner'; then I got to bustle," he remarked.

"Jimmy Garner!"

"She's mighty near got me," he said softly; "but maybe she'll get tired and won't call no more. She ain't plumb mad yet."

"James Garner!"

"It's coming now," said Jimmy dolefully.

The two little boys sat very still and quiet.

"James Lafayette Garner!"

The younger child sprang to his feet.

Little pigs. He let me see 'em suck," said Sam Lamb's partner proudly. "He's got a cow, too; she's got the worstest horns ever was. I believe she's a steer anyway."

"Shucks," said the country boy, contemptuously. "You do know a steer when you see one; you can't milk no steer."

### CHAPTER V.

Turning on the Hose. "Look! Ain't that a snake?" shrieked Billy, pointing to what looked to him like a big snake coiled in the yard.

"Snake, nothing!" sneered his companion, "that's a hose. You all time got to call a hose a snake. Come on, let's sprinkle," and Jimmy sprang out of the swing, jerked up the hose and dragged it to the hydrant. "My mamma don't never 'low me to sprinkle with her hose, but Miss Minerva she's so good I don't reckon she'll care," he cried mendaciously.

Billy followed, watched his companion screw the hose to the faucet and turn the water on. There was a hissing, gurgling sound and a stream of water shot out, much to the rapture of the astonished Billy.

"Won't Aunt Minerva care?" he asked, anxiously. "Is she a real 'ligious 'oman?"

"She is the Christianest woman they is," announced the other child. "Come on, we'll sprinkle the street—and I don't want nobody to get in our way neither."

"I wish Wilkes Booth Lincoln could see us," said Miss Minerva's nephew.

A big, fat negress, with a bundle of clothes tied in a red table cloth on her head, came waddling down the sidewalk.

Billy looked at Jimmy and giggled; Jimmy looked at Billy and giggled; then, the latter took careful aim and a stream of water hit the old woman squarely in the face.

"Who dat? What's yo' doin'?" she yelled, as she backed off. "It's a-gwine to tell yo' pappy, Jimmy Garner," as she recognized one of the culprits.

"P'int dat ar hose 'way 'om me, 'fo' I make yo' ma spank yuh slabsided. I got to git home an' wash. Drap it, I tell yuh!"

Two little girls rolling two doll buggies in which reposed two enormous rag-babies were seen approaching.

"That's Lina Hamilton and Frances Black," said Jimmy. "they're my chums."

Billy took a good look at them. "They's goin' to be my chums, too," he said, calmly.

"Your chums, nothing!" angrily cried Jimmy, swelling up pompously. "You all time trying to claim my chums. I can't have nothing a tail 'bout you got to stick your mouth in. You 'bout the selfishest boy they is. You want everything I got, all time."

The little girls were now quite near and Jimmy halted them gleefully, forgetful of his anger.

"Come on, Lina, you and Frances," he shrieked, "and we can have the mostest fun. Billy here's done come to live with Miss Minerva and she's done gone uptown and don't care if we sprinkle, 'cause she's got so much 'ligion."

"But you know none of us are allowed to use a hose," objected Lina.

"But it's so much fun," said Jimmy; "and Miss Minerva she's so Christian she ain't going to raise much of a row 'bout it, and if she do we can run when we see her coming."

"I can't run," said Billy; "I ain't got nowhere to run to an'—"

"If that ain't just like you, Billy," interrupted Jimmy, "all time talking 'bout you ain't got nowhere to run to; you don't want nobody to have no fun. You 'bout the picayuneest boy they is."

Little Ikey Rosenstein, better known as "Goose-Grease," dressed in a cast-off suit of his big brother's, with his father's hat set rakishly back on his head and over his ears, was coming proudly down the street some distance off.

"Yonder comes Goose-Grease Rosenstein," said Jimmy gleefully. "When he gets right close he's make him hon."

"All right," agreed Billy, his good humor restored, "let's baptize him good."

"Oh, we can't baptize him," exclaimed the other little boy, "cause he's a Jew and the Bible says not to baptize Jews. You got to mesmerize 'em. How come me to know so much?" he continued condescendingly.

"Miss Cecilia teach me in the Sunday school. Sometimes I know so much I feel like I'm going to bust. She teach me 'bout 'Scuffle little childrens and forbid them not,' and 'bout 'Ananias telled Sapphira he done it with his little hatchet,' and 'bout 'Liljah jumped over the moon in a automobile.' I know everything what's in the Bible. Miss Cecilia sure is a cracker-jack; she's 'bout the stylishest Sunday school teacher they is."

"'Twas the cow jumped over the moon," said Frances, "and it isn't in the Bible; it's in 'Mother Goose.'"

"And Elijah went to heaven in a chariot of fire," corrected Lina.

"And I know all 'bout Gabriel," continued Jimmy, unabashed. "When folks called him to blow his trumpet

he was under the haystack tast asleep."

Ikey was quite near by this time to command the attention of the four children.

"Let's mesmerize Goose-Grease," yelled Jimmy, as he turned the stream of water full upon him.

Frances, Lina and Billy clapped their hands and laughed for joy.

With a terrified and angry shriek their victim, dripping water at every step, ran howling by his tormentors. When he reached a safe distance he turned around, shook a fist at them and screamed back:

"My papa is going to have you all arrested and locked up in the calaboose."

"Calaboose, nothing!" jeered Jimmy. "You all the time wanting to put somebody in the calaboose 'cause they mesmerize you. You got to be mesmerized 'cause it's in the Bible."

A short, stout man, dressed in neat black clothes, was coming toward them.

"Oh, that's the major!" screamed Billy delightedly, taking the hose and squaring himself to greet his friend of the train, but Jimmy jerked it out of his hand, before either of them noticed him turning about, as if for something forgotten.

"You ain't got the sense of a one-eyed tadpole, Billy," he said. "That's Miss Minerva's beau. He's been loving her more'n a million years. My mamma says he ain't never going to marry nobody a tall 'bout he can get Miss Minerva, and Miss Minerva she just turns up her nose at anything that wears pants. You better not sprinkle him. He's been to the war and got his big toe shot off. He kilt 'bout a million injuns and Yankees and he's named Major 'cause he's a Confed'rit vetrun. He went to the war when he ain't but fourteen."

"Did he have on long pants?" asked Billy. "I call him Major Minerva."

"Gladys Maule's got the peony-skeeters," broke in Frances importantly, fussing over her baby, "and I'm going to see Doctor Sanford. Don't you think she looks pale, Jimmy?"

"Pale, nothing!" sneered the little boy. "Girls got to all time play their dolls are sick. Naw; I don't know nothing a tall 'bout your Gladys Maule."

Lina gazed up the street.

"That looks like Miss Minerva to me 'way up yonder," she remarked. "I think we had better get away from here before she sees us."

Two little girls rolling doll buggies

fairly flew down the street and one little boy quickly climbed to the top of the dividing fence. From this safe vantage point he shouted to Billy, who was holding the nozzle of the hose out of which poured a stream of water.

"You'd better turn that water off 'cause Miss Minerva's going to be madder'n a green persimmon."

"I do know how to," said Billy forlornly. "You turn it on."

"Drop the hose and run to the hydrant and twist that little thing at the top," screamed Jimmy. "You all time got to perpose something to get little boys in trouble anyway," he added ungenerously.

"You perposed this yo'self," declared an indignant Billy. "You said Aunt Minerva's so 'ligious she wouldn't git mad."

"Christian woman can get just as mad as any other kind," declared the other boy, sliding from his perch on the fence and running across the lawn to disappear behind his own front steps.

Holding her skirts nearly up to her knees Miss Minerva stood gingerly along the wet and muddy street till she got to her gate, where her nephew met her, looking a little guilty, but still holding his head up with that characteristic, manly air which was so attractive.

"William," she said sternly, "I see you have been getting into mischief, and I feel it my duty to punish you, so that you may learn to be trustworthy. I said nothing to you about the hose because I did not think you would know how to use it."

Billy remained silent. He did not want to betray his little companions of the morning, so he said nothing in his own defense.

"Come with me into the house," continued his aunt, "you must go to bed at once."

But the child protested vigorously. "Don't make me go to bed in the

daytime, Aunt Minerva; me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln ain't never went to bed in the daytime since we's born, an' I ain't never hear tell of a real 'ligious 'oman a-puttin' a little boy in bed 'fore it's dark; an' I ain't never a-goin' to meddle with yo' ole hose no mo'."

But Miss Minerva was obdurate, and the little boy spent a miserable hour between the sheets.

### CHAPTER VI.

Successful Strategy. "I have a present for you," said his aunt, handing Billy a long, rectangular package.

"Thank you, ma'am," said her beaming nephew as he sat down on the floor, all eager anticipation, and began to untie the string. His charming, changeable face was bright and happy again, but his expression became one of indignant amazement as he saw the contents of the box.

"What I want with a doll?" he asked angrily. "I ain't no girl."

"I think every little boy should have a doll and learn to make clothes for it," said Miss Minerva. "I don't want you to be a great, rough boy; I want you to be a sweet and gentle like a little girl; I am going to teach you how to sew and cook and sweep, so you may grow up a comfort to me."

This was a gloomy forecast for the little boy accustomed, as he had been, to the freedom of a big plantation, and he scowled darkly.

"Me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln ain't never hafter play with no dolls sence we's born," he replied sullenly, "we goes in swimmin' an' plays baseball. I can knock a home-run an' pitch a curve an' ketch a fly. Why don't you gimme a baseball bat? I already got a ball what Admiral Farragut gimme. An' I ain't a-goin' to be no sissy neither. Lina an' Frances plays dolls, me an' Jimmy—"

He stopped in sudden confusion.

"Lina and Frances and James!" exclaimed his aunt. "What do you know about them, William?"

"The child's face flushed. 'I seen 'em this mornin',' he acknowledged. Miss Minerva put a hand on either shoulder and looked straight into his eyes.

"William, who started that sprinkling this mornin'?" she questioned, sharply.

Billy flushed guiltily and lowered his lids; but only for an instant. Quickly recovering his composure he re-

acted with his bright, sweet smile. The doll lay neglected on a chair near by and Billy wanted her to forget it.

"Tell me 'bout Pillerk Peter," "Pillerk Peter?" there was an interrogation in her voice.

"Yas'm. Ain't you never hear tell 'bout Pillerk Peter? He had fifteen children an' one time the las' one of 'em an' his ole 'oman was down with the fever an' he ain't got but one pill an' they so sick they mos' 'bout to die an' ain't nobody in the fiel' fer to pick the cotton an' he can't git no doctor an' he tie that pill to a string an' draw it back up an' let the nex chile swallow it an' jerk it back up an' let the nex chile swallow it an' jerk it back up an' let the nex—"

"I don't believe in telling tales to children," interrupted his aunt. "I will tell you biographical and historical stories and stories from the Bible. Now listen, while I read to you."

"An' the nex chile swallow it an' he jerk it back up," continued Billy serenely, "an' the nex chile swallow it an' he-jerk it back up tell finely ev'ry single one of 'em, plumb down to the baby, swaller that pill an' the las' one of 'em got well an' that one pill it done the work. Then we tuck the pill and give it to his ole 'oman an' she swaller it an' he jerk it back up but didn't nothin' 't all come up but jest the string an' his ole 'oman she die 'cause all the strenk done gone outer that pill."

Miss Minerva opened a book called "Gems for the Household," which she had purchased from a silver-tongued book-agent. She selected an article the subject of which was "The Pure in Heart."

Billy listened with a seemingly attentive ear to the choice flow of words, but in reality his little brain was busy with its own thoughts. The article closed with the suggestion that if one were innocent and pure he would have a dreamless sleep.

"If you have a conscience clear, And God's commands you keep; If your heart is good and pure, You will have a perfect sleep."

Billy's aunt concluded. Wishing to know if he had understood what she had just read she asked:

"What people sleep the soundest?" "Niggers," was his prompt reply, as he thought of the long summer days and the colored folk on the plantation. She was disappointed, but not discouraged.

"Now, William," she admonished, "I'm going to read you another piece, and I want you to tell me about it, when I get through. Pay strict attention."

"Yas'm," he readily agreed. She chose an article describing the keen sense of smell in animals. Miss Minerva was not an entertaining reader and the words were long and fairly incomprehensible to the little boy sitting patiently at her side. Again his thoughts wandered, though every now and then he caught a word or two.

"What animals have the keenest sense of smell, William?" was her query at the conclusion of her reading.

"Billy goats," was Billy's answer without the slightest hesitation.

"You have goats on the brain," she said in anger. "I did not read one word about Billy goats."

"Well, if 'tain't a Billy goat," he replied, "I do know what 'tis 'thout it's a skunk."

"I bought you a little primer this mornin'," she remarked after a short silence, "and I want you to say a lesson every day."

"I already knows a lot," he boasted. "Tabernicle, he an' Mercantile both been to school an' they learnt me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln. I knows crooked S, an' broken back K, an' curly tail Q, an' round O, an' I can spell e-a-t cat, an' d-o-g dog an' A stands fer apple."

That night he concluded his ever lengthy prayer at his kinswoman's knee with:

"O Lord, please make for Aunt Minerva a little baby, make her two of 'em. O Lord, if you got 'em to spare please make her three little babies an' let 'em all be girls so's she can learn 'em how to churn an' sew. An' bless Aunt Minerva and Major Minerva, 'r ever 'nd ever. Amen."

As he rose from his knees he asked: "Aunt Minerva, do God work on Sunday?"

"No-o," answered his relative, hesitatingly.

"Well, it look like He'd jest hafter work on Sunday. He's so busy jest a-makin' babies. He makes all the niggers an' heathens an' injuns an' white chillens; I reckon He gits some body to help him. Don't you, Aunt Minerva?"

### CHAPTER VII.

Rabbits and Other Eggs. Billy was sitting in the swing, Jimmy crawled over the fence and joined him.

"Miss Cecilia's dyeing me some Easter eggs," he said, "all blue and pink and green and rellish and every kind they is; I took her some of our ben's eggs; she reckon I'll have 'bout a million. I'll give you one," he added generously.

"I want more'n one," declared Billy, who was used to having the lion's share of everything.

"You all time talking 'bout you want more'n one egg," said Jimmy. "You 'bout the stingiest Peter they is. Ain't you got no eggs? Get Miss Minerva to give you some of hers and I'll take 'em over and ask Miss Cecilia to dye 'em for you 'cause you ain't quanted with her yet."

"Aunt Minerva ain't got none 'cep'in' what she put under a ol' hen fer to set this mornin'."

"Can't you get 'em from under the old hen? Miss Minerva is such a Christian woman, she ain't—"

"You done fool me 'bout that 'ligious business befo'," interrupted Billy, "an' I got put to bed in the daytime."

"Well, she won't never miss two or three eggs," coaxed Jimmy. "How many did she put under the old hen?" "She put fifteen," was the response. "an' I don't believe she'd want me to tech 'em."

"They're 'bout the prettiest eggs ever was," continued the tempter, "all blue and pink and green, and 'bout a million kinds. They're just perzactly like rabbit's eggs."

"Me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln ain't never hear teller no rabbit's eggs sence we's born," said Billy; "I don't believe rabbits lays eggs now."

"They don't lay 'em 'cept to Easter," said Jimmy. "Miss Cecilia 'plained it all to me and she's my Sunday-School teacher and rabbits is bound to lay eggs 'cause it's in the Bible and she's 'bout the prettiest 'plainer they is. I'm going over there now to see 'bout my eggs," and he made believe to leave the swing.

"Le's us slip round to the hen-house an' see what the ol' hen's a-doin'," suggested the sorely tempted Billy. "Aunt Minerva is a-makin' me some night-shirts an' she ain't takin' no notice of nothin' else."

They tiptoed stealthily around the house to the back-yard, but found the hen-house door locked.

"Can't you get the key?" asked the younger child.

"Naw, I can't," replied the other boy, "but you can git in th'oo this here little hole what the chickens goes in at, while I watches fer Aunt Minerva. I'll stand right here an' hol' my cap while you fetches me the eggs. An' don't you take more'n five or six," he warned.

"I'm skeered of the old hen," objected Jimmy. "Is she much of a pecker?"

"Naw, she ain't a-goin' to hurt you," was the encouraging reply. "Git up an' crawl th'oo; I'll help you."

Billy, having overcome his scruples, now entered into the undertaking with great zest.

Jimmy climbed the chicken ladder, kicked his chubby legs through the aperture, hung suspended on his fat little middle for an instant, and finally, with much panting and tugging, wriggled his plump, round body into the hen-house. He walked over where a lonesome looking hen was sitting patiently on a nest. He put out a cautious hand and the hen promptly gave it a vicious peck.

"Billy," he called angrily, "you got to come in here and hold this old chicken; she's 'bout the terriest pecker they is."

Billy stuck his head in the little square hole. "Go at her from behind," he suggested; "put yo' hand under her easy like, an' don't let her know what you's up to."

Jimmy tried to follow these instructions, but received another peck for his pains. He promptly withdrew.

"If you want any eggs," he declared, scowling at the face framed in the aperture, "you can come get 'em yourself. I done monkeyed with this chicken all I'm going to."

So Billy climbed up and easily got his lean little body through the opening. He dexterously caught the hen by the nape of the neck, as he had seen Aunt Cindy do, while Jimmy reached for the eggs.

"If we ain't done let' my cap outside on the groun'," said Billy. "What we goin' to put the eggs in?"

"Well, that's just like you, Billy, you all time got to leave your cap on the groun'. I'll put 'em in my blouse till you get outside and then I'll hand 'em to you. How many you going to take?"

"We might just as well git 'em all now," said Billy. "Aunt Cindy say they's some kinder hens won't lay no chickens 't all if folks put their hands in their nests an' this here hen look like to me she's one of them kind, so the reater the eggs 'll jest be waste, any how, 'cause you done put yo' han's in her nes', an' a dominicker ain't a-goin' to stan' no 'projekin' with her eggs. Hurry up."

Jimmy carefully distributed the eggs inside his blouse, and Billy once more crawled through the hole and stood on the outside waiting, cap in hand, to receive them.

But the patient hen had at last raised her voice in angry protest and set up a furious cackling, which so frightened the little boy on the inside that he was panic-stricken. He caught hold of a low roost pole, swung himself up and, wholly unmindful of his blouse full of eggs, pushed his lower pair of chubby, sturdy legs, down which were slowly trickling little yellow rivulets, and half a plump, round body were all that would go through.

"Pull!" yelled the owner of the short fat legs. "I'm stuck and can't go no farder. Pull me th'oo, Billy."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

None for Him, Thank You. Representatives Hughes and Kinkead of New Jersey and Cravens of Arkansas, wits of the house, had just returned from the funeral of a col league. They were discussing the pomp and publicity of a congressional funeral.

"I do not want such a funeral, do you, Gene?" said Mr. Hughes to Mr. Kinkead.

"No, Billy, I do not care to be put away with so much display. What about you, Ben?" said Mr. Kinkead turning to Mr. Cravens.

"I don't want any funeral," responded the southerner, dryly.—Washington Correspondence in New York World.

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